DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 054 SO 030 083

AUTHOR Chevannes, Barry; Hansel, Bettina
TITLE The AFS Volunteer Resources Study: Summary of Findings from Jamaica.
INSTITUTION AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc., New York, NY. Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning.
PUB DATE Mar 90
NOTE 19p.; For related documents, see SO 030 078-084.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Developing Nations; Evaluation; Foreign Countries; Global Approach; Higher Education; *International Programs; Interpersonal Relationship; Secondary Education; Self Motivation; *Student Volunteers; *Voluntary Agencies; *Volunteers; Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS American Field Service; *Jamaica

ABSTRACT

Volunteerism in Jamaica refers to voluntary work through organized public bodies and operates at two levels: (1) organized and formal; (2) non-organized and informal. The first group is made up of organized interest groups or community based groups, while those groups attract greater numbers of volunteers, they also have a higher turnover. The greater portion of volunteerism in Jamaica is informal and nonstructured. A majority of Jamaicans do volunteer work in a non-formal way. There exists a strongly held belief in a system of relationships to society based on mutual dependence. The system of reciprocity is part of the cultural heritage of the country. Voluntary work is a function of organized altruism and networks of friendship and is viewed as crucial to the development of the American Field Service (AFS) in Jamaica. Constraints and problems affecting volunteerism are combating cultural notions-such as a restriction of one's freedom caused by a permanently structured obligation or duty. Shyness is suggested as a reason for not volunteering as well as the economic demands of paid work. Five recommendations are included for establishing a successful Jamaican AFS program using a public relations management techniques and working within the Jamaican world view of reciprocity to recruit volunteers. (NL)

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Summary of Findings from Jamaica

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Project Consultant, Barry Chevannes
Project Supervisor, Bettina Hansel

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THE AFS VOLUNTEER RESOURCES STUDY

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The AFS Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning

The AFS Volunteer Resources Study
Summary of Findings from Jamaica

Barry Chevannes, Project Consultant
Bettina Hansel, Project Supervisor
March 1990

The Concept

What is volunteerism? In the Jamaican context, a great deal of voluntary work is done but is not regarded as having anything to do with the spirit of volunteering. Unless it is explained that by voluntary work one also understands any work freely and spontaneously done for others, most people do not consider themselves to be volunteers because they are not attached to any public voluntary organizations.

A typical exchange in the course of the field work for this study goes like this:
Q. Do you do voluntary work?
A. No.
Q. You mean you don't do anything to help others?
A. Oh yes! That's what you mean? Yes!

Some go on to insist that helping other people is definitely not voluntary work, their logic being that this sort of reaching out is a duty imposed by being human or by religious beliefs, and therefore cannot be voluntary. And some will exclude from the concept of "voluntary" activities that are prompted by the request of others.

Volunteerism, in the minds of most Jamaicans, is therefore closely associated with voluntary organizations, of which there are many, and which have a very long history. In this sense, volunteerism refers to the expression of voluntary work through organized public bodies.

Structure of Voluntary Work

Voluntary work in Jamaica operates at two levels:
(a) the organized and formal
(b) the non-organized and informal

(a) Organized level
The first level comprises organizations that are either interest groups or community-based groups.

Examples of interest groups are the organizations of women, trade unions, church groups, professional associations, societies and, not to be ignored, political parties and party-affiliated organizations.

Interest groups are regional or national in their reach, mainly because those that are drawn to them are usually dispersed residentially, in which respect they contrast with those that are community based.

Examples of community-based groups are citizens' associations and youth clubs. Here it is the fact of living in close proximity with one another which provides the basis for these organizations. They share in the same facilities, or lack of facilities; are exposed to the same problems, whether these be environmental hazards, public communication and transport, or public utilities; and, very importantly, derive, from living and socializing with one another on a face-to-face basis, a community spirit.

The fact that the community or neighborhood provides the basis for such groups does not tell the whole story. Within communities there may exist cleavages and networks, which, when fully operational, place their stamp on the groups and organizations. In one small community, for example, there may exist two or more youth clubs, and the only difference between them is often nothing more than that the leading organizers of each are members of the same peer group. In a similar way, the leading and most active members of adult groups, such as Community Councils, are usually also personal friends who interact outside of the Council.

Partner and reciprocal folk traditions such as the workday (other names are morning sport, or day-for-day) may be included here. The former provides a way of saving money of its members, who are identified not so much by their residence as they are by the network of trust which brings them together. Each member "throws a hand" (a "hand" being a fixed amount of money) on a regular basis, say every week, and receives a lump sum when his or her "draw" or turn comes around. The day-for-day is a form of communal and reciprocal labor arrangement between friends, who take turns working for one another.

Both interest group and community-based types of organizations should not be conceived of as entirely separate and distinct. Many organizations set up on the national level and then organize community-based branches. In other cases, community-based organizations band together for national influence. Similarly, linkages can be established between community-based organizations and interest groups when personalities with high profile at the regional or national level act as a stimulant to the development or vibrancy of local community groups.

Linked though these two types of voluntary organizations are, they nevertheless bear a number of important differences.

The first difference lies in the type of volunteers they attract. People who have a powerful drive for self-expression and ambition tend to gravitate more towards interest groups and organizations with greater national profiles than towards those at the community level. Such groups become routes to national prominence and prestige. Close to this is a second difference, namely the greater ability by the middle classes to form and sustain interest groups, far greater than the corresponding ability among the working and lower classes. As a matter of fact, all the trade unions, with very few exceptions, are led by middle-class professionals and organizers, and so is the Jamaica Agricultural Society, the majority of whose members are small farmers, though at the branch/community level this may not necessarily be the case.

Why is this so? Middle class position confers greater skills and access to greater resources, through education and occupation. Because the country is essentially bilingual, and proficiency in Standard English is acquired by most Jamaicans only as a result of secondary and tertiary education, most people of the lower social classes place high – some would say too high – premium on education as a channel for upward mobility. People with education are highly respected in Jamaica, so that it is not unusual to find that even organizations at the lower class community level are led by middle class professionals.

A third difference is that community-based organizations, in particular those at what Jamaicans refer to as the "grass roots," that is lower class, admit the type of leadership that is charismatic far more than interest groups or than organizations based on middle-class communities. Characteristic of organizations under charismatic leadership is that the group is dependent on the leader for both decisions and discipline. Nor are individuals within the group so much asked to volunteer for a particular function but are "sent." Being "sent" means that the club leader would notify the group of a special function or a training event then would ask a particular individual to represent the club at that function or event.

A fourth difference between interest groups and community-based organizations lies in the fact that the community organizations sometimes attract a larger number of participants than the groups based on specialized interest. For example, some youth clubs boast up to 80 members in attendance at regular, weekly meetings. Except for annual general or emergency meetings, very few interest groups are able to turn out such numbers.

The reason for this appears to be due to the peculiarity of young people themselves. Youths tend to be idealistic. In the words of one of our subjects, "Youths make very

good volunteers." Consequently, most organizations in Jamaica, whether based on interest or on residence, tend to recruit young people.

A fifth and final difference lies in staying power. While organizations based upon the young people attract the greater numbers, they are at the same time the less stable. Social Development Commission youth officers report a high turnover among clubs. Some of this is seen here in this study. The interest groups tend to have longer life, even when they show decline in membership.

(b) Non-organized, informal voluntary work

As will become clear, the overwhelmingly greater portion of voluntary work in Jamaica is not organized. Indeed, if fieldwork can be used as a gauge, the overwhelming majority of Jamaicans do volunteer, but they do so in an informal way on behalf of friends, kin, social acquaintance, and even strangers. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the society could not function without this level of voluntary work, which is one reason why it is not seen as such by most.

Once it is understood that volunteerism, as we have used the term, encompasses activities done for others, only a handful of the ninety or so people interviewed for this study admit that they do no voluntary work, usually, so they say, because their occupation leaves them no time even to help out neighbors. Miss Jacquie was one such. Although she used to help the Citizens' Association in her community in the past, today she does no voluntary work in any sense. Mrs Henry, similarly, insists that between her job and her housework she has not time to do anything for anybody, at work or in the community. And yet, when she is reminded by her husband of the barbecue tickets she sells on behalf of her church, she explains, "Oh, I don't call that voluntary work."

The overwhelming majority of people interviewed reach out to others in their everyday lives, revealing a very rich tradition of volunteering. There is Joy, the school teacher who hires domestic help not because she needs it, but because the helper needs the money; Garfield, the nineteen-year-old lad who invited a hungry stranger to share the meal he was cooking; Turner, the haulage contractor who took on a wandering teenager as his gardener, adopted an abandoned child, and played godfather to a disabled beggar whom he met at the pharmacy; Oswald, the legal clerk who relieves a hobbling old lady of her burden and supports her two extra blocks to her home; Christine, the self-employed bar keeper who seldom passes a day without giving a free lunch or bus fare to a hungry or bedraggled stranger; Connie, the thirty-five-year-old farmer who regularly provides help to the older people in bringing up heavy produce from the steep gully and hillside farms. The list could go on and on.

An important difference between organized and informal voluntary work is that whereas at the organized level volunteerism is able to make a difference precisely because it is structured, at the non-organized level it is sometimes strangled by the attempt to formalize it. Jamaicans prefer not to be constrained, but to be allowed freely to express themselves whenever they feel to do so. They chafe at any curtailment of this sense of individualism.

Motivation in Volunteerism

In the most general sense, Jamaican people will explain that they "do things for other people" because they, too, would like others to do things for them should they find themselves in need.

The following are a few of the many examples collected from the field.

> Peter: On my way to work one day, I came across a woman who fell sick and needed medical attention. I took a taxi and went to borrow a car, came back and took her to the hospital. It made me late for work. That was a couple of months back. Then a few weeks ago, I returned home from work to find that Juliet, my wife, had taken ill when I was at work but someone had gone out of his way to help her reach the hospital. So I look and say, "Suppose I had not taken that woman to the hospital, maybe I might have come home and found Juliet dead for want of someone to take her to the doctor."

> Barry: Many times I am on the street and see people, even strangers, their cars break down. As a mechanic I help them, because I might find myself in that situation sometime and will need help.

> Miss Eliza: The more I give, the more I get. Once when I was staying in Kingston, somebody came and begged me. I gave him the last twenty cents I had. By midday I got a registered letter with money in it.

What we have here is a highly developed system of belief in reciprocity, that is in a system of relationships to society based on mutual dependence.

It has been found in Jamaica that people will sometimes beg or demand favors, not out of need but in order to become indebted, since indebtedness provides the basis for reciprocation. Likewise, they will give the very last dollar, feeling that as they have done, some hand will reach out to them. So deeply entrenched is this system of reciprocity in that community that social stigma is attached to tightfistedness, and

people who are unwilling to give favors, for whatever reason, are sanctioned into giving it anyway.

This system of reciprocity is perfectly understandable in a small community where everyone knows everyone else and no one is fully self-sufficient. But how about the case of volunteering help to those who, by virtue of being strangers, are not likely to be in a position to reciprocate?

It is here that we see that this idea of reciprocity and mutual dependence has a significance akin to a world view. One does not actually have to know or be acquainted with the individuals one volunteers to help. Indeed it does not matter. But the good that one does is the promissory note that one will receive good, when one needs it. It is as though the world, society, is conceived of as being in a state of equilibrium of exchanges. One never gives without getting, nor gets without giving.

Cultural Roots of Reciprocity

The system of reciprocity is part of the cultural heritage of the country, and thus appears to be the normal way of things. Voluntary work in the society is a function of two complementary systems: organized altruism and networks of friendship. In Jamaica, it may be that friendship fulfills the role played by kinship in societies where kinship structures are intact and serve to enforce bonds of solidarity and mutual dependence.

Organized service clubs in Jamaica are also very strong. Mr Minott, a middle-class businessman with a long history of volunteerism, points out that "Service clubs carry with them a lot of fellowship. People are therefore in it not just to perform voluntary work. You come for fellowship and catch the spirit. Where fellowship is high, service is also high, and vice versa." Again, people are not performing voluntary work out of a sense of duty or for a cause as much as because of the friendships and feelings of mutual dependence.

Strong cultural roots are found in traditions such as "Diggins," which are a form of community labor that could include clearing a piece of land or "digging" a house spot. Miss Clo, a 70-year-old peasant woman, describes some of these traditions:

> "But take funerals – masons, carpenter come build the vault and casket, and the bereaved only find the food. Weddings, too, are voluntary. People come clean and decorate the house, help cook and share, while the men kill the goat or pig. They don't have to do it, but it's from original, way back, how our parents used to do it – a part of our culture, from ancient days.

> "Our people were slaves, who never work for money. Slavery abolish, but they never had money to employ workers. So they organize and say, 'You work for me and I work for you.'
>
> "Take house raising – you get yu rum and fritters, and the men come in the moonshine and they work and sing, and by tomorrow morning the house done. It's dying out, yes, except for funeral and wedding, but some still work day-for-day, but not as before."

Reciprocal forms of labor originated not from Emancipation but from African village and kinship life. Day-for-day is a remnant of the Dahomean *dokpwe*. But Miss Clo is quite right in locating the tradition in culture. Life would be impossible, she concludes, without mutual dependency.

Personal and Social Factors

The strength of feelings of reciprocity and mutual dependence does not, to be sure, exhaust the motives for voluntary work, of either organized or non-organized sort. Many of those interviewed described their motivation as "innate" or "natural." These people will describe the joy and personal satisfaction they get from helping others.

Many informants say they perform voluntary work in order to spread the influence of a group or a cause. Such are the political activists, like Mr Henry, who describes himself as the unofficial "mayor" of his community; and Granny, whose activism goes back to the first general election under full adult suffrage, in 1944. Both are clearly affiliated with a political party, motivated by "love of the people" in Granny's case and love for his "community" in Mr Henry's case.

But by far the most important social cause is religion. A great deal of voluntary work is prompted by the outreach work of the churches, which are probably the initiators of more organized voluntary work than all other organizations combined. So important are the churches in this regard that the six umbrella groups spanning the spectrum of religious orthodoxy have formed themselves into a single Project ACCORD, the immediate aim of which is the distribution of relief to hurricane victims [Hurricane Gilbert, 1988].

Class Factors in Motivation

Elements of the folk concept of reciprocity are very much present among the middle and upper middle classes. In support of this statement is the personal remark of Dr

McNally that "society has been good to me, and since I have been favored, I try to assist others," or that of Mrs Sanderson, a young entrepreneur, who believes that by becoming the secretary of her Past Students' Association she was "putting back something that I got into the school."

However, it is far less a case of doing good so that good will be done to you than of repaying what good one has received. There is a clear divergence here from the views of reciprocity expressed by the poor and lower middle class. *Middle- and upper- middle-class generosity is more a question of social obligation which comes with one's social standing, or of giving because one has already got*, but it is expressed as "humanitarianism," commitment to one's profession and community, duty, social conscience, or a "feeling that as little as I have, others have less."

Among the middle class, voluntary work is also undertaken for careerist motives. This is especially true of the rapidly upwardly mobile. Dennis Mighty is the best example of this:

> "Voluntary work is necessary if one wants to climb the corporate ladder. This would preferably be done within a prestigious service club. . . . Senior managers always consider community service when they assess staff for promotions."

Another example is Forbes, whose extraordinary level of voluntary work, which he is unable to sustain effectively, is based on the consuming conviction that "these activities build contacts which I can use one day whenever some problem arises which requires going outside regular channels," contacts which are also "useful for getting information that may help in my job or social situation." And the enthusiasm with which George Brown throws himself and his company into furdraising for charities is, at least partially, due to "the advantage of community service to my business," such as increasing his range of contacts and offering him a high profile as a good citizen.

Another important difference between the social classes lies in the exercise of authority and decision making. This question arises because of what appeared in the early interviews to be the ability of certain grass roots leaders to get people to act where no others could. Also, no one who understands Jamaica's political culture and the role of the party bosses and party "rankings" would fail to appreciate the importance of charisma, personalized power, and authority.

The interviews reveal that people do volunteer because of the particular personalities who invite them to.

Michael is a youth leader in Blue Hole, the fictitious name for one of Kingston's many ghettos. All ghettos are controlled by more-or-less monolithic party political structures, which prevent the opposing side from establishing effectively its own. Non-affiliated organizations are permitted to exist, as long as they pose no threat to the prevailing party. In Blue Hole, the Los Perfectos Youth Club was founded by Michael six years ago, amid the suspicion of the ruling party machinery and party attempt to control it. Los Perfectos has managed to remain non-political, but realistically has not spurned contact with the then ruling party, since this brings many advantages to the youths.

A number of club members interviewed concede that Michael's presence is decisive in getting certain work done. The respect for him is so great that he has been able to get other youths jobs, and has access to the Public Relations staff of one of the city's largest factories nearby.

There seem to be three qualities which have contributed to making Michael the kind of leader he is. The first is a single-minded devotion to the community, as a result of which even the Gold Age Club members will render any support he asks them for. The second quality is hard work – he is tireless in his efforts and does not set tasks which he himself would not do. Third is his integrity. According to Norma, a club executive member, the leaders of three other youth clubs she was looking to join had all failed to live by the principles they themselves had laid down. One got a girl pregnant, another stole the treasury, and third tried to affiliate the club to one of the political parties. Michael, she confirmed, was foremost in sticking to the discipline of the club. As a result of these qualities, only Michael is able to get the most out of club members, especially when hard work is being tackled.

Anyone who has qualities like these, whether among grass roots people or among the middle classes, gains the respect and loyalty of his or her peers. However, what makes the grass roots communities somewhat different is that in many instances such leaders become folk heros, with the ability to mobilize and deploy people. Ghetto communities around Kingston spawn such individuals. The same cannot be said for the middle-class communities, though it is not unheard of.

Thus far, we have been discussing why people volunteer, that is their motive in volunteering. But this does not fully explain how they come to volunteer, and this I would like to turn to by way of summary, since the answer is implicit in the foregoing.

In Jamaica, most people come to volunteer because they are asked to. In a recent article, Geof Brown outlined the strategic steps taken to get AFS off the ground in Jamaica. A careful reading would suggest that the personal network was an essential ingredient, seasoned by the author's good standing and the respect of his peers.

The very first interview conducted in this study was of an AFS volunteer working in the local offices on an almost full-time basis while awaiting a call for a job. She knew nothing of AFS until she was simply invited by the Coordinator, a personal acquaintance, to volunteer. She explained that she would not have volunteered even if she had known what she now knewabout the organization. She was not that type of person to simply come forward and volunteer.

The importance of the personal-network factor requires that much thought be given to it in the development of AFS work in Jamaica. For, if it is critical in how people are recruited for voluntary work, it is equally so for ensuring their long staying-power as volunteer. The personal invitation is a way of expressing confidence in the ability and idealism of the volunteer. It is a form of recognition in its own right, which maybe helps to explain why it is the form of recruitment most widely used in Jamaica.

The other way in which people come to volunteer seems to be through personal interest, such as the public response to certain causes, with or without looking for recognition. Such cases of volunteer activity, however, are not as long-lasting nor as sustained.

An important consideration is that the length of time served as a volunteer does not necessarily depend on the manner of recruitment. Minott, for example, speaks of positions being thrust upon him as a volunteer, and his joining the Kiwanis as being quite by accident, on the invitation of a friend. He said that he had in fact wanted to decline because he had already been deeply involved in other voluntary work. But having gone, and having been "volunteered" for a particular task, he not only has remained but has come to enjoy the Kiwanis.

Constraints and Problems Affecting Volunteerism

As I have already explained, one of the first constraints to many people volunteering is the attempt to structure their free and spontaneously-generated voluntary initiatives. Outside of kinsfolk and close friends, Jamaicans do not like to be put in permanent relations of dependency. The way this is conceived, it is a restriction of one's freedom to be placed in a position where the free act of giving is no longer free, becoming instead an obligation or duty. The gift is no longer that which is given, but that which is demanded, that which is extorted.

This is precisely what Mr Turner meant when he declared himself turned off from the disabled person whom he met at the pharmacy and used to assist. On their first meeting he gave the man a gift of $10, without being asked. Subsequent visits brought them closer together, so he decided to help him on a regular basis. He began regularly

to treat him to gifts of dinner, to repair his wheelchair, and to give him cash. After a while, his "ward" kept complaining to him that "some boys" steal the money he gave, suggesting by his tone that he needed the money replaced. This turned off Turner, whose suspicions that he was being used were confirmed by a visit to the house.

A second constraint to voluntary work which informants express is the impact of personality. Some people, when asked why in their opinion other people fail to volunteer, give "selfishness" as an answer. But the word does not always connote a moral failing. Indeed, it is also used to refer to extreme shyness and uncommunicativeness. While I was conducting one of the interviews for this study, a child was chided as "selfish" because he failed to respond to me, despite the coaxing of his parent and relatives. Thus, when they say that some people do not volunteer because they are selfish, it is apparent that some informants are referring to the personality trait of being shy and disliking attention.

Closely related to shyness is a reason for not volunteering often heard from the informants themselves, namely that nobody asked them. If what Mr Minott says about the Kiwanis is true of most voluntary organizations, namely that 10% of the members join of their own initiative and that the rest are recruited, then we could conclude that the potential of voluntary work is largely untapped, in that a virtual army of recruits is just waiting to be asked to join.

A third and very compelling reason informants give for not volunteering is "time," by which they imply that their primary obligations leave them little or no free time. For some, like Paul, a teacher, whose two jobs combined, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., leave him only weekends free to do organized voluntary work, lack of time is a very real inhibiting factor. "To help others," he observes, "one must be in a position to help."

For others, like Jacquie or Mrs Henry and many other women, it is both occupation and domestic chores which consume their time. Little wonder, then, that voluntary organizations, particularly those which are community-based, are dominated mainly by males, while among those of the interest-group type the involvement of women is to a large extent supported by the availability of the paid domestic help of other women.

A fourth reason cited by informants is the observation that volunteerism needs a social climate to flourish in, and that the concern with "bread and butter" discourages the volunteering spirit. The way Dave, the young vice-president of a Citizens' Association, puts it is that volunteerism depends on the way the country is structured, that it needs a national effort, in a situation where people are caught up with strictly economic matters.

There is little doubt that the 1980s marked a far cry from the 1970s when citizens' associations sprang up all across the country and received official encouragement. The concept of voluntary work on Labor Day was institutionalized then. Labor Day became a day when people performed voluntary labor in their own interest. The main form it took was labor directed towards the community – building day care or community centers, repairing community facilities and roads, cleaning and beautifying the environment, etc., with material sometimes raised by community effort, sometimes given by Government. But the essence of it was that it was voluntary and collective. Labor Day still continues as a tradition, but the scale of it has shrunk.

Nevertheless, as I have already shown, it is the organized type of voluntary activity that has declined, not the personal, non-organized sort.

A fifth constraint is politics. Jamaica has a competitive, two-party system of democracy that has given the country stability ever since universal adult suffrage forty-five years ago. But at the same time, Jamaica is a relatively poor country, caught, like so many other third-world countries, in the vise of scarce resources, on the one hand, and unrelentingly high expectations, on the other. Add to this situation the fact that political power acquired through votes is ultimately based on the manipulation of residential territory, and you have 1980! This was a year when the very foundation of civil society was nearly destroyed by politically inspired violence. In that year alone, at least 800 people were murdered.

They were not the only casualties. Voluntary organizations of all types went under, particularly community-based ones.

The effects are still felt, nearly ten years later, as politics remains a source of great stress for many volunteers. The formation of a voluntary organization within a given territorial constituency, especially in the most volatile of the urban areas, is immediately viewed as a threat unless it is founded by or has the support of the controlling party.

Even individual action can be occasion for suspicion. And given the stepping stone which voluntary organizations sometimes provide to ambitious individuals, it is easy to see that the non-politicized volunteer would feel intimidated and would wisely restrict the scope of his voluntary work, sometimes to the detriment of those who could benefit most.

In one of the communities where a number of our interviews were done, a community organization whose campaign against a specific case of police brutality drew national attention, the organization, informants claimed, was undermined by the incumbent Member of Parliament, because he was unable to swing it in the direction of his party.

In such a situation in such a community, only the most politically militant retained a high profile of volunteerism, and even so, at some risk.

A sixth constraint is what some interviewees identify as "bad experience," by which they mean some form of hurt as a result of trying to help others, or of getting involved in some organizations. Bad experiences are met at all levels of volunteering. At the level of non-organized and personal volunteering, Mr Turner's was such a case. At the level of organized activity, misunderstandings, personal conflict, theft, false accusations, etc., serve to make some people cynical of all voluntary organizations.

The implication here is that volunteering puts every volunteer at risk. Usually, the favor freely offered redounds to the honor and encouragement of the giver. Nobody would volunteer if his or her work is not valued. Therefore, experience of ingratitude or misuse of a volunteer's labor becomes a strong enough reason not to volunteer.

A seventh constraint which deserves some mention is outward migration. Many voluntary organizations have been affected by the loss of skilled and qualified volunteers leaving for North America. Roughly 15,000 Jamaicans migrate to the United States annually; those who want to migrate are far more.

In one particular urban community, the migration-orientation among the people has been so strong that the voluntary work of the development agency working to upgrade skills and provide entrepreneurial opportunities for the residents has been stymied. Nearly one-half of those who lived there, a survey showed, were of recent origin. Most of them viewed their residence as temporary. One project which the agency funded three times folded up because one entrepreneur-volunteer migrated secretly with agency funds, the second with the equipment, while the last one disappeared before passing on his skills.

Issues of Management

A distinction needs to be made at the start between community-based and nationally- and regionally-based voluntary organizations. The former are completely voluntary and seldom employ paid staff while the latter, particularly those rendering specialized services, cannot function effectively without a minimum permanent staff.

This difference accounts for the fact that at the grass roots level the departure of a key individual, the break-up of the core peer group, or political or economic pressures can cripple voluntary organizations. Hence, they tend to fluctuate. According to a recent estimate, barely 50% of registered youth clubs were active.

On the other hand, the degree to which the broader interest groups are able to keep alive and function well is due to the quality of the leadership, as judged by their ability to function in a democratic and participatory way; by their ability to raise funds; and by their public profile, which provides a sound basis for recruiting fresh and energetic members.

Staff and Volunteers

Voluntary organizations inevitably have to pay attention to ensuring smooth relations between paid staff and volunteers. On the one hand, many volunteers resent being directed by paid staff, especially if they are not social equals, while on the other hand, staff sometimes find some volunteers inept, arrogant, and generally far from helpful.

Many voluntary groups, however, seem able to integrate both staff and volunteers rather well. The Family Life Education Project within the Ministry of Youth and Community Development, for example is a model. Its director is generally referred to by many volunteer counselors as "a mother to us." Observation of the field staff at work, as well as interviews of the volunteers themselves, confirm the existence of a warm and friendly relationship. There seem to be two reasons for this. First, the staff are professionally trained persons within their area of work. They not only know how to deal with young people, but they love dealing with them as well. Secondly, the relationship is symbiotic. The very structure and aim of the Project is such that neither can do without the other, that either needs the other. Although there is a high turnover rate among volunteers, this is due not to stress coming from the staff, but to other factors such as occupation.

In some other voluntary organizations, it is the volunteers who direct the work of the paid staff, as for example the local parish boards or the 4-H Clubs.

Training

Professional workers in voluntary organizations recognize the need for volunteer training in management and organizational skills. However, to my knowledge such training is not generally done, although resources do exist for it.

What training there is is limited to the development of personal skills, especially among the women's organizations.

There are, to be sure, important exceptions. Sistren Theatre Collective has a distinguished record of in-house training of its members from its inception as a voluntary group during the 1970s to its present status as a collective. Some groups, of course,

such as the Family Life Education Project, are designed for specialized training of volunteers. In the Family Life Project the volunteers are given a full week of intense live-in training, which so enthuse the volunteer counselors that a number of them later choose counselling as a profession.

In the case of other non-specialized bodies at the community level, the Social Development Commission provides training, but only in leadership.

The reasons for lack of training for volunteers are threefold. First, because there has not yet developed a concept of "volunteer," though more and more professional social workers are beginning to use the word, people volunteer to help because they feel they already have something to offer, which, as I have said, is given freely and without constraint. Secondly, people who are recruited are generally recruited for specific skills or expertise, and connected to this, thirdly, many voluntary organizations are specialist bodies who attract specialist people.

Linkages

Recognizing that in unity there is strength, voluntary organizations have long ago created linkages. One of the earliest creation was the Council of Voluntary Social Services, which grouped together a number of voluntary associations from the early 1940s. Under the Social Development Commission, youth clubs have had for decades active collaboration, mainly but not exclusively in the form of competitions. The credit unions and cooperative societies also work closely together. More recently, as I have already alluded, community councils tried to create a pressure group calling for legal status.

Recommendations

1. AFS needs to recognize its unique position in Jamaica, which should influence its expectations about volunteering.

AFS, strictly speaking, cannot be classified as a voluntary organization such as we have been describing, since it is neither an interest group as such nor a community based one. It is more like an agency, that is an organization set up to perform a specific service. Its charge, aims, and objectives, etc. are not determined by those who are called the AFS volunteers. To my knowledge, one does not join AFS, though one volunteers to help.

This difference may not in the final analysis be of much significance, provided AFS does not expect to have a permanent cadre of volunteers in a country like Jamaica where there is no abstract concept of volunteering as such (an army of people who just want to do things, anything) – provided, that is, AFS expects that there will be a high turn-over of volunteers. It should also be remembered that AFS is a fairly "young" organization in Jamaica. As the organization develops, more program returnees can be trained for leadership positions. This could add an element of greater stability in the AFS volunteer force.

2. AFS should build on the Jamaican world view of reciprocity in trying to recruit volunteers to support the programs.

Voluntary work in Jamaica, among the main social classes and strata, is a function of an outlook, according to which human beings are by nature in a state of mutual dependence. To give voluntarily is to be assured of being treated equally.

It seems that AFS could tap this rich heritage more, for example by locating and tapping the goodwill of non-AFS parents with children at school abroad, or of those who "have been blessed" with children who have done well. This by no means should be taken to preclude looking for the intercultural constituency which may be out there, for example among the international friendship societies, but it does mean that the largest reservoir of volunteering goodwill is to be found among people who have a sense of reciprocity and mutual dependence in a world where we are all "our brother's keepers."

Even AFS parents might be urged more to reciprocate the hosting of foreign students. One AFS host confessed that she volunteered on the prompting of her daughter, who said, "Mom, since I have been treated so well, why don't you do for an exchange student what others have done for me?" She would not otherwise have volunteered.

AFS Jamaica is working in this direction. Potential volunteers are constantly being sought among the groups with the most interest in AFS: natural families of AFS students and students wanting to go on AFS, host families, and returnees.

3. Key people within AFS should invite more people to volunteer.

It should be recognized that more people will volunteer if asked, than those who will come forward on their own initiative, hence the need for a more aggressive

recruitment policy. To some extent, it does matter that the person who asks also commands respect.

4. AFS must seek to develop good public relations (NOT publicity) with the volunteer force by showing recognition and gratitude for the work they contribute.

Geof Brown, in the paper already cited, makes a distinction between good publicity and good public relations. Publicity creates a public identity for the organization, but may at the same time raise expectations for results that cannot be achieved. In the matter of volunteerism, informants suggest that for most people publicity is more harmful than good to the mobilization of support. Public relations, on the other hand, is based on the development of relationships, building credibility for the organization and gaining the support it needs to operate effectively.

A key component of the public relations activity is expressing gratitude to those who assist the organization. For this there is no substitute, since it is the only way of regenerating voluntary support. AFS Jamaica recognizes its volunteers in a variety of ways, and must continue to do so. This recommendation must always be in the forefront of any volunteer-based program.

5. AFS should pay attention to the development of a sense of fellowship among its volunteers.

Considering the importance of fellowship to sustaining an active membership among service clubs, attention could be given to ways and means of generating a spirit of solidarity and purposefulness among volunteers. Attaining the sense of "we" among the volunteers cannot be accomplished simply by providing a number of social events for those who work with the AFS programs. It is essential that the volunteers become involved in the goals or mission of the organization and, though working together, become involved with each other. Personal relationships are then always critical in voluntary work. Efforts in this direction by AFS include social events, parties, networking, and helping returnees find employment.